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TAGS: PREL KR LG

SUBJECT: LATVIA RECOGNIZES KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Charles W. Larson, Jr. Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (U) On the afternoon of February 20, Latvian FM Riekstins formally recognized the independence of Kosovo (text e-mailed to EUR/NB). The statement announcing the decision noted the importance of protection of minority rights in the context of implementation of the Ahtisaari plan and reaffirmed that Kosovo is not a precedent for any other situation in the world. We understand that the official Latvian government documents will be delivered in Pristina on Feb. 21 by the German office there.

¶2. (C) Comment: It is not insignificant that Latvia moved rather quickly on this. There has been much discussion in the press here in recent weeks that Latvian foreign policy is captive to Moscow. While only one decision, this one does do something to belie that idea. Given the dynamics within the EU, Latvia easily could have dragged out the process for weeks and then claimed that it only acted in response to pressure inside the Union. That it moved so quickly should be seen as a positive sign of the importance Latvia places on being a responsible NATO and EU member.

LARSON